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WING SHOTS AND RESTS

On the evening of June 28, 1900, the editor and the writer boarded the west-bound Santa Fe train at Chicago. Our plan was to spend about ten days en route to Seattle, Wash., via Albuquerque, Pasadena and Portland, and to devote the remainder of the summer to the mountainous region of northern Washington.

In spite of the fact that we had the summer before us we were anxious to get to bed. But the gentleman who presides over the fortunes of the itinerant public couldn't get it thru his Ethiopian skull that we had to get up at five o'clock in the morning to look at the birds. There is nothing which will so pleasantly relieve the tedium of railway travel as the taking of a bird horizon. To be sure your fellow-passengers look askance at you as you suddenly thrust your head out of the window to get the last wing-flash of an unexpected friend or as you dash out of the car door to make the most of a station stop. They will think you odd if you hasten to the edge of a near-by swamp and listen, one ear strained for bird music and the other on the engine bell; but "what's the odds so long's you're 'appy?" You have only to recall that your passage is paid for, and that you are living in a larger world than is allowed to some.

There were no revelations and few notables until we reached the high prairies of eastern Colorado. By the time the Spanish Peaks were sighted the Lark Bunting and the Desert Horned Lark had become familiar. Not until we turned to skirt the Rockies did the distinctly "western" species appear. These in turn had become so familiar that we gave a shout of glad surprise when we heard Dickcissel at Shoemaker, N. M. He was holding forth bravely at this distant outpost of his tribe. One could not help admiring his taste. An encircling rock wall, with a convenient stream-cut exit, in case the sheriff were incontinently to appear at the entrance, shut in a little paradise of meadow, shrubbery and rest. Within Dickcissel held undisputed sway over a railroad water tank, a farm house and the green; while the Rock Wrens, clamorous but cheerful, manned the battlements.

From Las Vegas the chase became exciting. A Zone-

tailed Hawk was harrying a rabbit within forty yards of the passing train. At Ribera the Long-tailed Chats gave us a special matinee. Here was the place we ought to have stopped instead of at Thornton as we had planned. At Rowe, Arkansas Goldfinches were filling the air with their penetrating sweet notes.

THORNTON AND THE RIO GRANDE.

We found Thornton to be a desolate little "dobe" village about two miles from the Rio Grande. The country surrounding was very disappointing, inasmuch as it was almost entirely destitute of vegetation. However, we were in for it, so we packed up our knapsacks and struck out for the distant fringe of green. It, and especially the bleary eye of the river, seemed ever to recede across the barren sands. We came up with it long after sunset and simultaneously with a sandstorm.

Huddling on the sand, behind the clump of osiers on the river bank, we ate a very dusty "snack" and cherished grave misgivings for the night. But never was a serener sky than that which greeted us at the time of the first turn-over in bed.

The Rio Grande is a very insignificant stream at this time of year. We waded its ten rods or so of muddy water repeatedly, having a care for the quicksands and holes. The west bank was well wooded with a dwarf cottonwood, and it was here that we made our principal finds.

The early morning hours were busy ones. Old bird notes were refreshed in my mind and new ones disentangled. Prominent among these latter were those of the Western Blue Grosbeak. In seeing and hearing this bird one gets the impression of an Indigo Bunting on a larger scale. The song is, however, more varied as well as stronger.

The Long-tailed Chat is the great mimic here. Nuthatch, Oriole and Flicker notes were distinctly traced to his door. The imitations were remarkably close. One bird reproduced the "Klyak" note of the Flicker so perfectly as to quite deceive us for a while.

Arkansas Goldfinches were common. This species seems to emphasize the connection between Goldfinch and Siskin. A yellowish-white spot on their wings shows conspicuously in flying, an illumination something after the fashion of Siskin.

In their songs, too, they preserve a note which easily shows generic connection with *Spinus pinus*, "Kezeem," or "Kezum," of peculiar pathos and penetration.

FLAGSTAFF AND THE SAN FRANCISCO MOUNTAINS.

The next stop was made at this trim little town in the Arizona highlands. Of course the ornithologist's first desire upon getting into the average "new" town is to get out. We did so at once. As we set out from Flagstaff we had no intention of climbing San Francisco Peak, reported to be 12,561 ft. high; but as we journeyed toward it along the level pine-clad valley which lies at its feet, the desire grew upon us until it became a determination. A prospector whom we met toiling toward town with a couple of burros, kindly sold us a three-pint canteen, so that the water question was disposed of. Up that carpeted valley we crept, every faculty on the *qui vive* for birds, until we reached a picturesque little canon with solid, perpendicular walls, from the north side of which a tiny stream of water trickled. This empties into a trough which is evidently a great resort for the birds. On the way the Chestnut-backed Bluebird and Long-crested Jay had come to swell the life horizon. Here at the spring birds thronged continually. Cassin's Finches, Arkansas Goldfinches, Lark Sparrows, flycatchers, hummers, blackbirds, warblers—a vitascope, always in motion, ready to the eye, was the scene of this spring.

Time would fail to tell of the ascent, which was accomplished by noon of the next day. The panorama presented from the summit of San Francisco Peak is rather unique for its command of plain and desert and high plateau. Bird-wise, however, this mountain mass is not large enough to attract a great variety of strict mountaineers. Our mountain horizon includes only eight that one might not reasonably expect to find in comparatively level country.

Here we had an experience of Cassin's Kingbird which I shall not soon forget. This bird was really first noted at Thornton, where *verticalis* was also common. The resemblance was so close that *cassini* was suffered to pass as a possible young *verticalis*. Experience on the lower slope of San Francisco Mountains, however, dispelled this illusion. When

I heard the distant "Chebew," which is the distinctive note of this bird, I could not doubt that we had a new species. Investigation proved that a pair of these birds were solicitous for young, presumably well grown. Jones and I shot three times without success, and then squandered the best part of an hour chasing the provoking creatures from branch to stub and from stub to boulder, around in the open woods. Never was the range set at a certain tussock of grass but the bird made off with a mocking wail a pace or two before the goal was reached. Never was a snap shot attempted but the bird dodged behind a tree as the gun was coming up. "Chebew, chebew," and for aught I know those woods are still re-echoing that doleful, aggravating sound.

MELLEN AND THE COLORADO RIVER.

Arizona is certainly well named. Except for the pine section about the San Francisco Mountains all we saw was fearfully desolate. There was, however, a genuine fascination to be felt in the clear-cut mountain ranges of the west. For the most part absolutely bare, these intruders pierce the expanse of level plain like the dorsal fins of some titanic sea monster. Nature has not veiled her secrets here. He who runs, even by rail, may read. The ash piles in this her disheveled back yard look precisely as they might have looked when first dumped down. Jagged outlines are the rules rather than the exception in these volcanic ranges; and the culminating point is reached in the "Needles," near the Colorado River. Altho twelve miles distant from the Santa Fe bridge they seem but a step, so simple and so clear cut are they. Nothing but oil can do them justice, for half their charm lies in their marvellous coloring, which both in intensity and delicacy of shading almost surpasses belief.

Our last ornithological stop was made here at Mellen, by the Santa Fe bridge over the Rio Colorado. We found the Colorado a much more formidable stream than the Rio Grande. Its course is very changeable. Just now it is engaged in tearing down the east bank for the mile or so above the station, and the crash of great chunks of alluvium as they fell into the river's jaws was a constant feature of our stay. And

dirty! if anything it is a little dirtier than the Missouri—and that is enough said.

We had barely time to force our way through the dense willows of the lower or alluvium level, and emerge on the acacia flat above, before dark. It was time enough, however, to completely turn our heads with the prospect of birds. After a swim we lay down at the edge of the third, or desert, level; but not, as it proved, to sleep. The moon was too high and the air was too hot and the mosquitoes were too numerous. Finally we retired further into the desert and there, wrapped in the soft mantle of the sky, we slept.

From 4:00 A. M. until 8:00 it was "birds," and from then till 7:00 P. M., when we boarded the tardy west-bound train it was *heat*. The place certainly abounded in birds, but the heat, after eight o'clock, put an effective quietus on man and bird. The day's work was done.

The willow flats were the haunts of such birds as the Yellow Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, Traill's Flycatcher, and the Long-tailed Chat; while the characteristic birds of the acacia level were the Gambel's Partridge and the Verdin. The Partridge is easily the most abundant of all birds in this region. Altho very secretive (we were not able to secure a specimen) they piped from every bush and scurried from every brush heap.

The Verdins are not by nature obtrusive, but some idea of their numbers can be gathered from the fact that nearly every other clump of acacia contained a nest. These nests are balls of twigs clustered, without attempt at concealment, about some lower limb, at a height of from four to eight feet. The structure is quite compact, entered through a hole in the side, and always warmly and softly lined. Altho a dozen or so were examined none were found occupied at this time (July 5th.)

Truth to tell we did not do much bird study here. We shot at sight and identified hastily, and then succumbed to the heat. Never had we seen the like before. After lolling under the willows of the river bottom and voting them insufferably hot, we sought the shelter afforded by the railroad water-tank, and where the temperature was just appreciably mitigated by the dripping waters. The air was literally a blast from a fur-

nace, for a strong wind blew off the Needles, which looked in the offing like glowing coals. This wind, together with the dripping water, produced a curious effect on the rousing consciousness. Several times did I start up from a doze, possessed with the idea that I was in a burning building. The hot air was realistic enough, and the dripping of the water on the pebbles beneath did duty for crackling flames.

In spite of the almost intolerable heat we shall hold Mellen in grateful remembrance as being the place where the "life horizons" grew at the most rapid pace we had ever known. An introduction to thirteen new species inside of six hours is granted only to the tyro, who doesn't know how to count his mercies, or to the traveler in foreign ports. To my mind there is nothing else in ornithological experience quite equal to the joy of making new acquaintances in a new field. The fresh possibilities of note and action possess an irresistible fascination for an "old hand."

After leaving Mellen our editor took a side trip in Southern California, of which a separate account appears in this number; while I proceeded to Blaine, in Washington, where I fitted out for the mountains. Mr. Jones rejoined me at Everett, ten days later, and we headed toward the Chelan country via Wenatchee and the Columbia River route.

If bird-gazing from a railroad train be an absorbing pastime, birding from the deck of a river steamboat is the very embodiment of luxury. A Columbia River steamboat is a thing *sui generis*, a creature of tough sinews and stubborn will. Our attention on the trip up the river was about equally divided between the droves of magpies which swarm on the rugged sides of the canon and the plucky steamer as she steadily fought her way up the rapids.

The trip up Lake Chelan was less exciting as an athletic feat, but the scenery disclosed as you ascend is second to none in America. Birds were for the moment forgotten as we gazed upon those stupendous piles of granite and porphyry amongst which we were to spend a month. Upon landing at the head of the lake we lost no time in putting the Stehekin River between us and the last vestige of civilization, a trim little mountain hotel called "Field's." Then we surrendered to nature and her vocal interpreters.

An incident of the ascent up Pershall Creek toward Wright's Peak was the discovery of a Calaveras Warbler's nest containing three fresh eggs. The nest was a bulky affair, composed of coarse grasses, with a lining of finer grass; and it was placed three feet high in the top of an elkweed or "devil's club," in the brushy tangle of a draw.

Strange voices filled the air as we made the first reaches of the mountain proper. The Western Winter Wren poured forth his tiny cataract of song. Cassin's Finches trilled or hummed tunes softly to themselves. The Mountain Creeper peeped lustily as if to shame my complete oversight on a previous trip; while that rarest sound, the ravishing sweet call of the Dwarf Hermit Thrush, penetrated the woods like an angel voice which haunts the groves of Paradise. If birds of a feather may flock together, count me always among those who babble through the woods or wing at will over the glaciers and awful heights of Wright's Peak.

Our camp was pitched on a heather meadow just bursting into flower. Within a stone's throw I gathered a bouquet of thirty-three species, and I suppose the resources of the season were only half developed. Beside us was the glacier, and only the barren aiguilles rose above. Bird life at that height was fairly abundant. Leucostictes, Pine Siskins, Juncoes, Mountain Bluebirds, Grouse and Ptarmigan were the characteristic species. Of the last named species we found one bird moulting and unable to fly. He had been hiding in the rocks of the main ridge. We came, I suppose, as near as any one has to finding a Leucosticte's nest. We were accomplishing the ascent of the peak proper by a new route, and were within 200 feet of the top when we came upon a bulky nest of grass placed on a ledge of rock, without attempt at concealment. It was on the exposed south slope, and doubtless for a purpose. The nest was in good condition, and the body cavity would tally with the requirements of a Leucosticte. The birds which hovered about did not betray any particular emotion at our inspection of the old nest, but they evidently called that vicinity home.

The panorama this year from Wright's Peak was all that heart could wish. Mounts Stuart, Rainier, and Baker, with Glacier Peak, were in the horizon, while Manchexhorner and

the tentative "Mt. Oberlin" invited conquest in the near distance. Our hearts swelled in eager anticipation of the expected triumphs of the next few weeks. Alas! the golden chalice was to be dashed from the hand ere long. Returning the next day from the ascent of Splinter Peak we found the best part of our equipment in ashes. A deep-seated punk log had transmitted our smouldering camp fire and spread it in a devastating circle thru the peaty heather beds. Mr. Jones was the heavy loser. Specimens, photographic plates, notes, blankets, pocket book, return railroad ticket, gone—ugh! We had stood that day on one of nature's pinnacles. A slight misstep on the ridge of Splinter Peak, a pitching forward, would have been—no, *not instant* death. One could have leaped *either way* and not have struck short of 125 feet. But we were down now—way down!

Our losses compelled an instant relinquishment of the cherished plans. Dropping part way down the canon that evening we made the Field's the next day, where we secured supplies enough to enable us to undertake the journey, on foot, from Stehekin, via Cascade pass, to the Skagit River. On the Skagit we could count on finding other conveyance.

The return journey over the mountains was everywhere brightened by our study of the birds and, as may be noted elsewhere, some handsome horizons were taken. The scenic interest, however, so often overshadowed the ornithological that I fear the readers of THE BULLETIN will take me to task and remind me that I am supposed to be talking about birds. Still, if I succeed in dragging a bird or two in, I may perhaps be pardoned for speaking of the view from the divide. Leaving my knapsack beside the iron post which marks the summit of the Stehekin-Hamilton horse trail, I climbed up a neighboring spur, centrally located, for a commanding view. The mountains visible from this spot are certainly grander than anything visible from any American railroad; and I have been on them all so far as mountains are concerned. Eleven well defined glaciers were visible from this point; but they only held the flanks of the mountains; the unfettered, unconquerable peaks rose thousands of feet above. The incessant thunder of the avalanche was only fit praise for the majesty of these untamed monarchs. A mile or so down the trail on

the west side one gets the finest view of a mountain whose aspect and dimensions are simply terrific. A glacier clings midway, whose breaking members must topple over such a precipice as makes one shudder—and adore. One would hardly try, in thought, the awful peak. One is, somehow, content to recognize as part of the eternal fitness of things that *this* mountain should be considered unscalable.

Well, didn't a fussy old Ptarmigan fly up into my face and interrupt all this! Good cause for alarm tho, I was near stepping on some of her chicks. Never did a mother conduct a more gallant retreat than she, as she shrieked her rage from a near-by rock, or dashed at my face in very act to consume me, while her fledglings of every size scuttled off thru the heather. I caught one of the youngest in my hand, whereupon the mother made such a furious onslaught that I was obliged to defend myself with my left. I did not hurt her, but I speedily let the youngest go for fear I should have to. Such spirit I never saw before. What if a hen were as big as a man!

This much is clear: That the female White-tailed Ptarmigan begins incubation as soon as the first egg is laid. I made out ten young and probably missed others. The largest was near a third grown, while the youngest had not broken shell above a day.

Here is a good place to rest. One cannot tell it all, even ornithologically. Of course we saw more birds; and, of course, we got back. Never mind that. Mr. Jones has gone on down the trail. Leave me here on my mountain.

WILLIAM LEON DAWSON.

Columbus, Ohio.

THE HORIZONS.

Our first horizon out of Chicago began at LaPlata, Missouri, at 5 o'clock in the morning and ended at noon, when we pulled into Kansas City. The slight change in topography and vegetation was accompanied by a very slight change in the